

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2656  
INFO AMCONSUL MILAN  
AMCONSUL NAPLES

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINS, PINT, IT  
SUBJECT: POLITICAL LEADERS URGE TOUGHER MEASURES TO COMBAT NEW  
WAVE OF VIOLENCE

REF: A) 0558 ROME; B) 1976 ROME 20489

1. SUMMARY: IN AN UNKNOWING PRELUDE TO A TENSE WEEKEND OF MOUNTING VIOLENCE, NICCOLA LETTIERI, UNDERSECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR, IN AN ADDRESS THURSDAY TO THE ITALIAN SENATE CALLED FOR STRICTER GUN CONTROL. HE ALSO RECOGNIZED THAT, WHILE THE FAR RIGHT MAY HAVE PROVOKED THE MIDWEEK VIOLENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ROME, THE FAR LEFT HAS BEEN EQUALLY PROMPT TO RESPOND VIOLENTLY TO THE PROVOCATION. FOR THE FIRST TIME THE GOVERNMENT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IT BELIEVES THE MIDWEEK VIOLENCE WAS PART OF AN ORGANIZED PLOT. PUBLIC CONCERN HAS DEEPENED FOLLOWING A "SAD AND BLOODY SUNDAY" DURING WHICH A POWERFUL BOMB ABOARD A TRAIN WAS DEFUSED ONLY MOMENTS BEFORE ITS SCHEDULED DETONATION, TWO HIGHWAY POLICEMEN WERE KILLED BY BANDITS, AND A SERIES OF FIVE EXPLOSIONS THROUGHOUT ROME INCREASED THE STRAIN UPON THE PUBLIC ORDER. END SUMMARY.

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2. LETTIERI'S SPEECH WAS A RESPONSE TO PARLIAMENTARY DEMANDS FOR A GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING OF THE VIOLENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ROME WHICH BEGAN WITH A NEO-FASCIST RAID ON FEB. 1 AND CULMINATED IN THE SHOOTING OF A PLAINCLOTHES POLICEMAN AND A STUDENT PROTESTER DURING A LEFT COUNTER-DEMONSTRATION FEB. 2. LETTIERI STATED THAT THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT KNOWS "SUBVERSIVE CENTERS" AIM AT "PROVOKING PROFOUND DISTURBANCE OF PUBLIC OPINION AND

THE CREATION OF AN ATMOSPHERE OF TENSION UNDOUBTEDLY DANGEROUS TO THE GUARDIANSHIP OF DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES AND REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS." HE CONTINUED: "BUT THE INSTRUMENTS AVAILABLE TO CONFRONT THIS TYPE OF CRIME ARE NOT ADEQUATE; A NEW METHODOLOGY FOR POLICE ACTION IS NEEDED." LETTIERI WENT ON TO CITE THE EASY AVAILABILITY OF GUNS AS A MAJOR CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO THE ESCALATION OF "VIOLENCE IN THE PIAZZA," AND CALLED FOR NEW LAWS TO SEVERELY PENALIZE ILLEGAL GUN POSSESSION. THE COMMUNISTS RESPONDED TO THE MIDWEEK VIOLENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ROME WITH CONDEMNATION OF BOTH THE FASCIST YOUTH GROUPS WHICH PROVOKED THE CURRENT OUTBREAK AND THE EXTRAPARLIAMENTARY LEFTIST GROUPS RESPONSIBLE FOR WEDNESDAY'S EXCHANGE OF GUNFIRE. AN ARTICLE IN L'UNITA OF FEB. 3 STATED: "THE AUTONOMOUS COLLECTIVES (VARIOUS LEFTIST GROUPS) AND THE FASCISTS HAVE DEVELOPED FOR TOO LONG A TIME PARALLEL AND CONCOMITANT ACTION... THE SAME LOGIC MOVES THEM, THE HATRED OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, THE WILL TO SUBVERT THE REPUBLIC THROUGH TERRORISM AND GUERRILLA WARFARE." THIS DEPARTURE FROM THE TRADITIONAL PCI BLAMING OF ONLY FASCISTS AND NEO FASCISTS FOR VIOLENCE FOLLOWS UPON AN EARLIER DEPARTURE NOTED IN REFTTEL (A).

3. THE WEEKEND INCIDENT WHICH HAS ELICITED THE GREATEST MEDIA OUTCRY OF CONCERN FOR PUBLIC ORDER WAS THE DISCOVERY BY POLICE EARLY SUNDAY MORNING OF SEVEN STICKS OF DYNAMITE ABOARD A NAPOLI-MILANO TRAIN. NEWSPAPERS ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM STRESS THAT THE BOMB, HAD IT GONE OFF, WOULD HAVE KILLED AND INJURED MORE PEOPLE THAN DIED IN THE AUGUST 1974 "ITALICUS" INCIDENT IN WHICH 14 PASSENGERS WERE KILLED WHEN A BOMB EXPLODED ABOARD A TRAIN JUST EXITING FROM A TUNNEL NEAR FLORENCE. THE ORDINE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NUOVO, A FASCIST ORGANIZATION BANNED SOME MONTHS AGO AFTER BEING LINKED TO A SERIES OF BOMBINGS AND KILLINGS THROUGHOUT ITALY, WAS A FIRST BLAMED FOR THE BOMB ATTEMPT, BUT HAS NOW DISCLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY. ITALIAN AUTHORITIES DISCOUNTED PRESS SPECULATION THAT THE BOMB HAD BEEN PLACED TO EXPLODE AS THE NORTHBOUND TRAIN PASSED A TRAIN IN WHICH PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI WAS RETURNING TO ROME FOLLOWING A SPEECH IN REGGIO CALABRIA. A SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS IN ROME SATURDAY NIGHT WERE TARGETED AT TWO ROME POLICE STATIONS, THE GARAGE OF THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR, A SAVINGS BANK, AND A CAR OWNED BY AN MSI MEMBER. NO FATALITIES OCCURRED BUT DAMAGES WERE SUSTAINED IN VARYING DEGREES AT ALL LOCATIONS. IN MILAN AN UNEXPLODED BUNDLE OF DYNAMITE WAS DISCOVERED IN A PCI MEETING PLACE.

4. ALL PARTIES, INCLUDING THE LEFT, HAVE URGED STRONGER GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO COMBAT THE RECENT WAVE OF VIOLENCE, DEMANDING IN PARTICULAR THAT THE SUBVERSIVE GROUPS BE ELIMINATED BY THE CLOSING OF THEIR MEETING PLACES. THE SECRETARIATS OF MAJOR PARTIES ALL RELEASED STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS, STRESSING THAT THE

STRATEGY OF TENSION MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO DISTURB THE PUBLIC ORDER, ALLUDING TO THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL UNCERTAINTIES WHICH HAVE ALREADY PRODUCED AN UNEASY CLIMATE. MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR COSSIGA EMPHASIZED THAT THE SPECIAL LEGISLATION NEEDED TO ALLOW THE MINISTRY TO CLOSE THE FAR LEFT MEETING PLACES HAD BEEN DENIED IN THE DECEMBER 17 MEETING OF PARTY SECRETARIES MENTIONED REFTEL (B), AND THAT UNTIL IT IS ENACTED, HIS MINISTRY IS POWERLESS TO ACT AGAINST LEFTIST EXTREMISTS.  
BEAUDRY

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## Message Attributes

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